

CHAPTER 1. GENERAL PROCEDURES

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1. What is controlled correspondence?
2. How are the due dates assigned?
3. What actions need to be taken if the due date cannot be met?
4. What are the procedures for interim replies for OST mail?
5. What are the procedures for acknowledgment letters for correspondence that Washington Headquarters refers to the field offices?
6. What are the procedures for congressional correspondence that field offices refer to Washington Headquarters?
7. What are the Associate Administrators' responsibilities?
8. What are the concurrence and coordination guidelines and procedures for correspondence?

1. **What is controlled correspondence?** Controlled correspondence refers to all correspondence received or processed through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Executive Secretariat (HOAES). An FHWA Correspondence Control Sheet (see Figure 1.1) is attached to all controlled correspondence. Controlled correspondence is separated into categories as follows:

- a. **Very Important Person (VIP) correspondence.** This category includes correspondence from White House officials, Cabinet officers and heads of independent agencies, Members of Congress, Supreme Court Justices, State Governors, State Representatives, mayors, and foreign equivalents of the above.
- b. **Other correspondence requiring priority action.** This category includes correspondence from prominent citizens including leaders in industry, finance, labor, politics, law, education and research, and other correspondence based on the subject matter or other reasons requiring priority action.
- c. **Routine correspondence.** This category includes correspondence received from any source that does not require a reply. The action office will take the appropriate action as indicated on the control sheet.

2. **How are the due dates assigned?** The due dates are assigned as follows: (Workdays shown are counted from date of receipt of correspondence in the Office of the Secretary of Transportation (OST) Executive Secretariat (S-10) or (HOAES).)

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------------|---|---|
| a. | S-10 control mail | - | 5 workdays (Secretary's signature)
5 workdays (Direct Reply) |
| b. | White House (WH) referrals | - | 15 days WH hardship mail
30 days WH bulk mail |

- c. VIP correspondence - 5 workdays
- d. Other correspondence - 5 workdays
- e. Routine correspondence - 10 workdays (Washington Headquarters)
15 workdays (Division Offices)

3. **What actions need to be taken if the due date cannot be met?** Action offices are expected to meet the due date as assigned. The following procedures are to be used if a due date cannot be met:

- a. **Request for extension of due date.** If circumstances are such that the due date must be extended for 1 to 5 days, contact the HOAES Correspondence Analyst listed at the bottom of the control sheet for further instructions. Requests for extensions from S-10 must be made in writing or by e-mail, and they should be discussed with the HOAES Correspondence Analyst before any action is taken.
- b. **Interim replies on correspondence prepared for signature in FHWA.** An interim reply should be used only when an assigned due date cannot be met (see Figure 1.2). In order to ensure that the due date is met, the decision of the action office to use an interim reply should be made, if possible, on the third workday of the initial 5-workday suspense period. In the opening paragraph of the acknowledgment letter, fully identify the incoming correspondence by such information as its date, the organizational element from which it was referred, etc. Once the letter has been signed, the HOAES Correspondence Analyst will assign a new 3-week due date for the final reply.

4. **What are the procedures for interim replies for OST mail?** Contact the HOAES Correspondence Analyst before preparing interim replies for OST mail (see Figure 1.3).

5. **What are the procedures for acknowledgment letters for correspondence that Washington Headquarters refers to the field offices?**

- a. The HOAES sends an acknowledgment letter to the writer of the letter advising of the referral to the field office (see Figure 1.4).
- b. A copy of the acknowledgment letter is sent to the field office.

6. **What are the procedures for congressional correspondence that field offices refer to Washington Headquarters?**

- a. When a Member of Congress writes directly to a field office on matters requiring higher-level coordination:

- (1) The letter is promptly referred through appropriate channels to the Washington Headquarters with a proposed reply.
 - (2) The field office sends an acknowledgment letter to the Member of Congress advising of the referral to the Washington Headquarters.
 - (3) A copy of this acknowledgment letter is sent to the HOAES with the referred letter. When a response is prepared, the action office will identify the incoming letter and reference the acknowledgment made by the field office in the opening paragraph of the reply.
 - b. Direct replies may be made by field offices through appropriate channels to Members of Congress if purely local matters are involved or the subject matter is noncontroversial.
7. **What are the Associate Administrators' responsibilities?** The Associate Administrators shall:
- a. Designate an employee (correspondence contact) to maintain liaison with the HOAES and to be responsible for effective control and timely processing of controlled correspondence, including returning correspondence to the HOAES that should be handled by another program office.
 - b. Ensure that any correspondence of the type described in paragraph 1a (VIP Correspondence) of this chapter that has not been routed through the HOAES is promptly hand carried to the HOAES.
 - c. Audit the process of mail referred to action officials to ensure that due dates are met.
 - d. Respond promptly to letters and inquiries from the HOAES.
 - e. Coordinate with other offices that have any interest in the subject matter.
8. **What are the concurrence and coordination guidelines and procedures for correspondence?** In addition to the following, please refer to FHWA Order 1300.5, FHWA Coordination Guidelines, at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/legregs/directives/orders/13005.htm>
- a. **General Concurrences**
 - (1) **Concurrence within FHWA**
 - (a) Only those offices having a substantive interest in the subject of the correspondence shall be requested to concur on the "Grid" Form DOT F 1320.65 (see Figure 1.5).

- (b) Concurrence shall not be requested merely for courtesy or informational reasons. Information copies of the signed correspondence are sufficient for these purposes.
- (2) **Timely coordination.** Concurrence or nonconcurrence shall be accomplished without delay. Concurring offices must give high priority to correspondence requiring concurrence.
- (3) **Editorial correctness.** The originating office is responsible for editorial correctness of the correspondence.

b. **Procedures**

- (1) **Concurring offices.** The FHWA Delegations and Organization Manual, FHWA Order M 1100.1A, and the FHWA Routing Guide are helpful references for determining FHWA concurring offices. See <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/legregs/directives/orders/m11001a.htm> for the Manual.
- (2) **Predrafting conference.** By telephone, electronic mail (e-mail), or personal visit, confer as appropriate with the concurring office(s) concerning the prepared correspondence.
- (3) **Clearances**
 - (a) Prepare copies of all essential background material, such as the incoming letter. Keep such material to a minimum. Make copies only of those documents that are essential for understanding the correspondence, not necessarily all those used for composing the correspondence.
 - (b) Originals of the official file copy and the backup material may be used to obtain concurrences, if time permits, if the background material is voluminous and concurrence appears to be a routine formality.
 - (c) In the case of urgent correspondence, prepare a copy of the official file for each concurring office. Retain the originals of file copy and backup material. When the copies are returned, include concurrences and nonconcurrences on the official file copy as a backup measure.
- (4) **Time limits.** The concurring office is normally allowed only 4 hours to concur or nonconcur.

- (a) In cases where prompt transmittal is essential, hand carry the correspondence.
 - (b) Telephone concurrences may be obtained in crucial circumstances where the action and concurring offices are some distance apart.
 - 1 Read the correspondence to the concurring party or send it via facsimile (FAX) transmission or e-mail and request verbal approval.
 - 2 Indicate this approval on the official file copy of the correspondence, and note how it was obtained.
 - (c) Concurrences may also be obtained using e-mail or the FAX machine to transmit the signed concurrence grid. Electronic messages advising of concurrence must show the signing official as the sender and are made a part of the official file copy.
- (5) **“Previous Coordination Valid.”** When concurrences have been obtained and a minor error is found causing the correspondence to be retyped, the words “Previous Coordination (and/or Concurrences) Valid” will be written in the upper portion of the official file copy, allowing space for additional concurrences. Draw a **diagonal red line** through the original official file copy and staple it to the back of the new official file copy.
- (6) **Concurrence.** If the correspondence is acceptable to the concurring official, concurrence is indicated in the section provided on the official file copy by recording the office routing symbol, the concurring official’s surname (write legibly and do not use initials only), and the date of concurrence. The correspondence is promptly sent to the next office as listed on Form FHWA-111, Routing and/or Review Slip. See <http://intra.fhwa.dot.gov/informs/adobeforms/fhwa111.pdf>.
- (7) **Nonconcurrences**
- (a) If at all possible, disagreements should be resolved before the reply is drafted.
 - (b) If disagreements are not resolved:
 - 1 State the differences and reasons on a separate sheet.
 - 2 Indicate nonconcurrence on the official file copy of the correspondence.

- 3 Return both the separate sheet and the official file copy to the action office.
- 4 Do not make editorial changes other than to point out mistakes in spellings or grammar.

CORRESPONDENCE TRACKING SYSTEM CONTROL SHEET

CONTROL NO: 040107-008-2004/I-2004-5198

WRITER'S NAME: KENNEDY, PATRICK J

AFFILIATION(S): HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OTHER WRITERS: MITCHELL, MICHAEL D.

ORIGINATOR: U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CATEGORY: PERMANENT WITH DUE DATE

SUBJECT: DOCKET NO. 0ST-2002-12170 SURFACE TRANSPORTATION
REAUTHORIZATION

COMMENTS: REPLY RETURN TO HPLS FOR EDIT 1/16/KW

ASSIGNED TO:	TO ORGANIZATION	ACTION	DATE
	POLICY	ACTION OFFICE	01-07-04
	OFFICE OF LEGISLATION + STRATEGIC PLANNING	FORWARD REQUEST TO M. COLE 1-8-03	01-08-04
	POLICY	SIGN CHARLES D. NOTTINGHAM	01-22-04
	EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT	CORRESPONDENCE CLOSED BY KWEST	01-22-04

**SIGNATURE
LEVEL:**

POLICY

DISTRIBUTION:

ORGANIZATION
OFFICE OF LEGISLATION +STRATEGIC PLANNING
GOVERNMENTAL/CONGRESSIONAL AFFAIRS (I)

DATE
01-07-04
01-07-04

ANALYST/PHONE: KAY WEST / (202) 366-5656

Figure 1.1

Correspondence Control Sheet

- a. Control No. – The control number is assigned by the Correspondence Tracking System (CTS).
- b. Writer's Name – Name of the writer of the correspondence.
- c. Affiliation - Name of company or organization of the writer.
- d. Other Writer's – Name of any other writer's associated with the correspondence, e.g., constituent's name.
- e. Originator – A list of common sources of correspondence.
- f. Category – Whether a response is required or not.
 - (1) Permanent with Due Date – date the reply is due by in HOAES.
 - (2) Appropriate Handling – Assigned office determines whether a response is required.
 - (3) For Your Information – No response is required, control has been assigned for the information of the assigned office only.
- g. Subject – Subject matter of the correspondence.
- h. Comments – Any special instructions may be listed here, or special actions taken on the control.
- i. Assigned to – Lists the Action Office and location/status of the correspondence.
- j. Signature Level – Lists who should sign the letter.
- k. Distribution – Lists offices that have been sent a copy of the incoming correspondence for their information.
- l. Analyst/Phone – The analyst and phone number in the Executive Secretariat's office that controlled the correspondence and the person who should be called with any questions.

*THE CONTROL NUMBER (040107-008-2004) IS BASED ON THE YEAR, MONTH, AND DATE, WHILE THE NEXT 3 DIGITS (-008) INDICATE THE NUMBERED DOCUMENTS ENTERED INTO THE SYSTEM ON THAT DAY, THE LAST 4 DIGITS (2004) REFER TO THE OFFICE THAT CREATED THE CONTROL. Other control numbers from other offices like S-10 or OST/I are listed after the slash (e.g., I-2002-5198).

INTERIM REPLY PREPARED FOR FHWA SIGNATURE

Refer to: HIPA

Date

The Honorable Sheila Jackson Lee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

S-10 Control No. 041028-002

Dear Congresswoman Lee:

Thank you for your October 25 letter to Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta regarding the U.S. 59 South and Spur 527 project in Houston, Texas. I have been asked to reply.

I appreciate your letting us know of your concerns about the project. Given the nature of the inquiry, we will need additional time to complete our review with our Texas Division Office. I will follow up with you in the near future. If a member of your staff would like to discuss the subject with Mr. Michael Weiss of our Legislative Analysis Team, he may be reached at 202-366-1956.

Thank you for your patience as we give your request the attention it deserves.

Sincerely,

Mary E. Peters
Administrator

FHWA:HIF:RWeingroff:rw:6-4856:11/05/02
FHWA Control No. 041030-016-2004
S-10 Control No. 041028-002
cc: S3, S10, C, P, B, I, HOAES, HPLS

File Name: D/#acknow6.HOA.doc
Ms. Whiteside HEPE
Files 3212
HDA-TX (2)

Figure 1.2

INTERIM REPLY PREPARED FOR S-1 OR S-2 SIGNATURE

Date

The Honorable Tom Osborne
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2002

Reference: Control Number 040211-013

Dear Congressman Osborne:

Thank you for your January 31 letter on behalf of Mr. Edward Brennan of U.S. Concrete Products, L.L.C.

Department staff are reviewing the concerns you raised. However, additional time is needed for a complete review of the issue. I will follow up with you on this matter in the near future.

In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. If a member of your staff would like to discuss the subject with Nicole Nason, Assistant Secretary for Governmental Affairs, she may be reached at (202) 366-9714.

Thank you for your patience as we give your request the attention it deserves.

Sincerely yours,

Norman Y. Mineta

FHWA:HIF-1:RWeingroff:rw:6-4856:02/14/02
FHWA Control No. 040213-005-2004
S10 Control No. 040211-013
cc: S3, S10, C, P, B, I, HOAES, HPLS

File Name: D/discard./#acknowl.7.doc
FHWA Files Return
Files 3212
Mr. McCormick HIBT

Figure 1.3

ACKNOWLEDGMENT LETTER

January 29, 2004

Refer to: HOA-3

Ms. Nola Frick
Sun 'n Lakes of Lake Placid Recreation District
P.O. Box 1187
440 Sun 'n Lake Blvd.
Lake Placid, FL 33862

Dear Ms. Frick:

This is in response to your letter to Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta requesting Federal funds to complete the sidewalk along the boulevard in your neighborhood.

I have forwarded your letter to our Florida Division and have asked someone to address your concerns. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Florida Division at 850-942-9650.

Sincerely yours,

Mary L. Peterson
Executive Secretariat

cc: Florida Division

Figure 1.4

CONCURRENCES	
RTG SYMBOL	
INITIALS/NO	
DATE	
RTG SYMBOL	
INITIALS/NO	
DATE	
RTG SYMBOL	
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GRID

Form DOT F 1320.66
Supersedes previous edition

OFFICIAL FILE COPY

Figure 1.5